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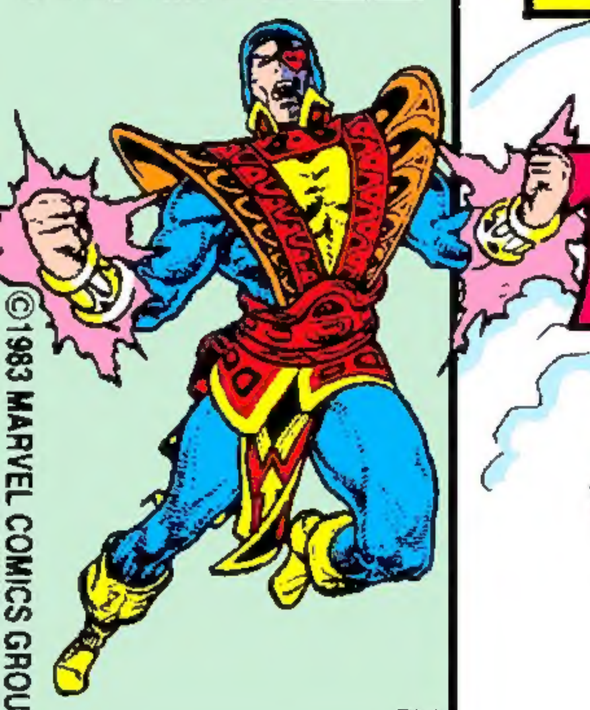

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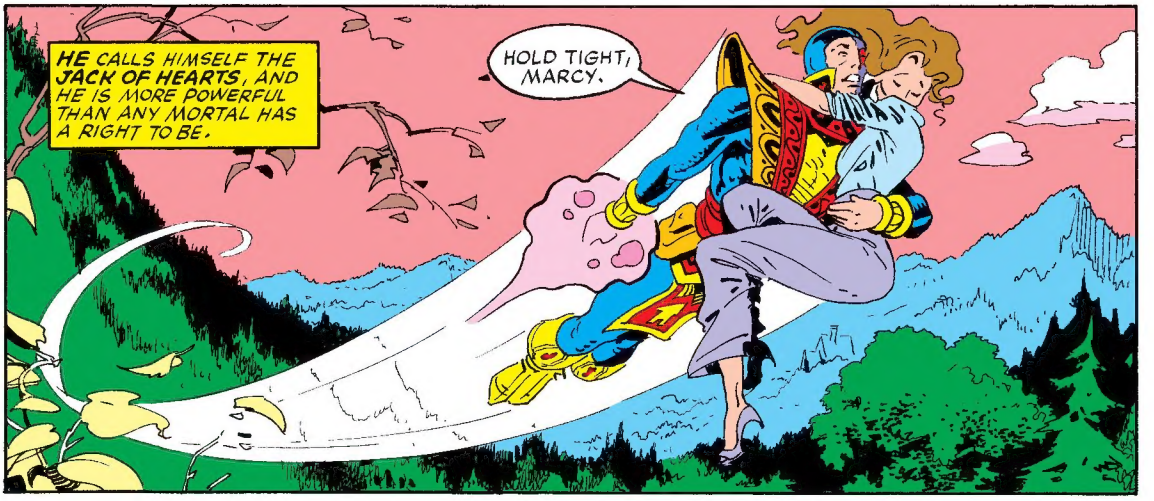
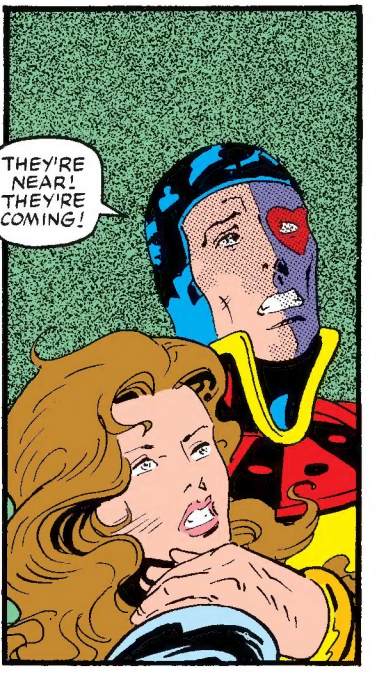
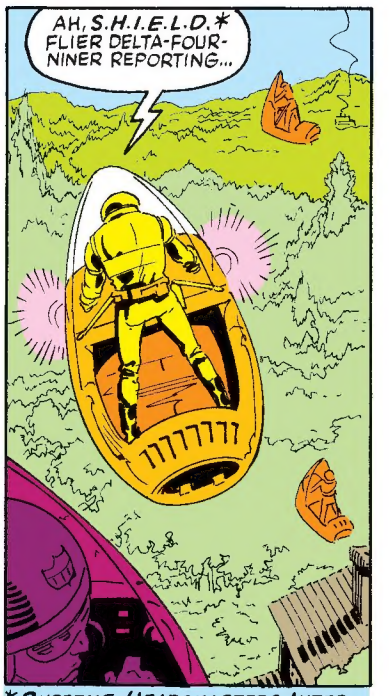
#2 IN A FOUR-ISSUE LIMITED SERIES

THE JACK OF HEARTS™

INVASION!

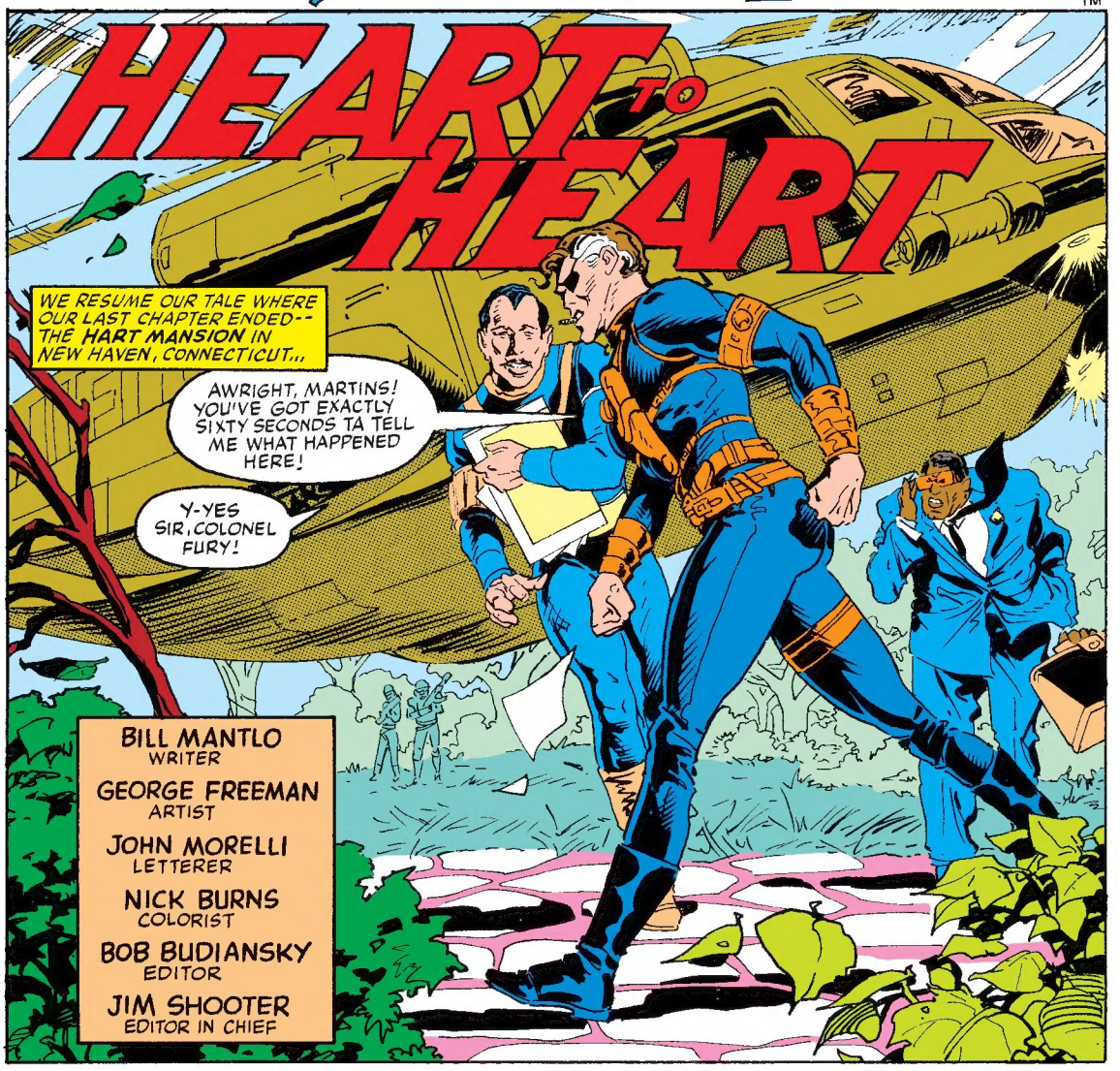


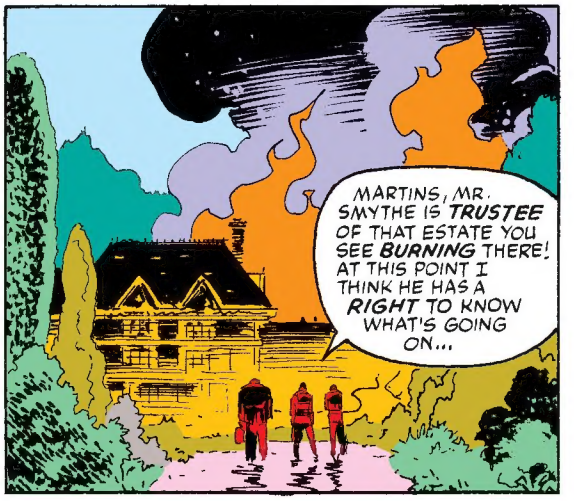


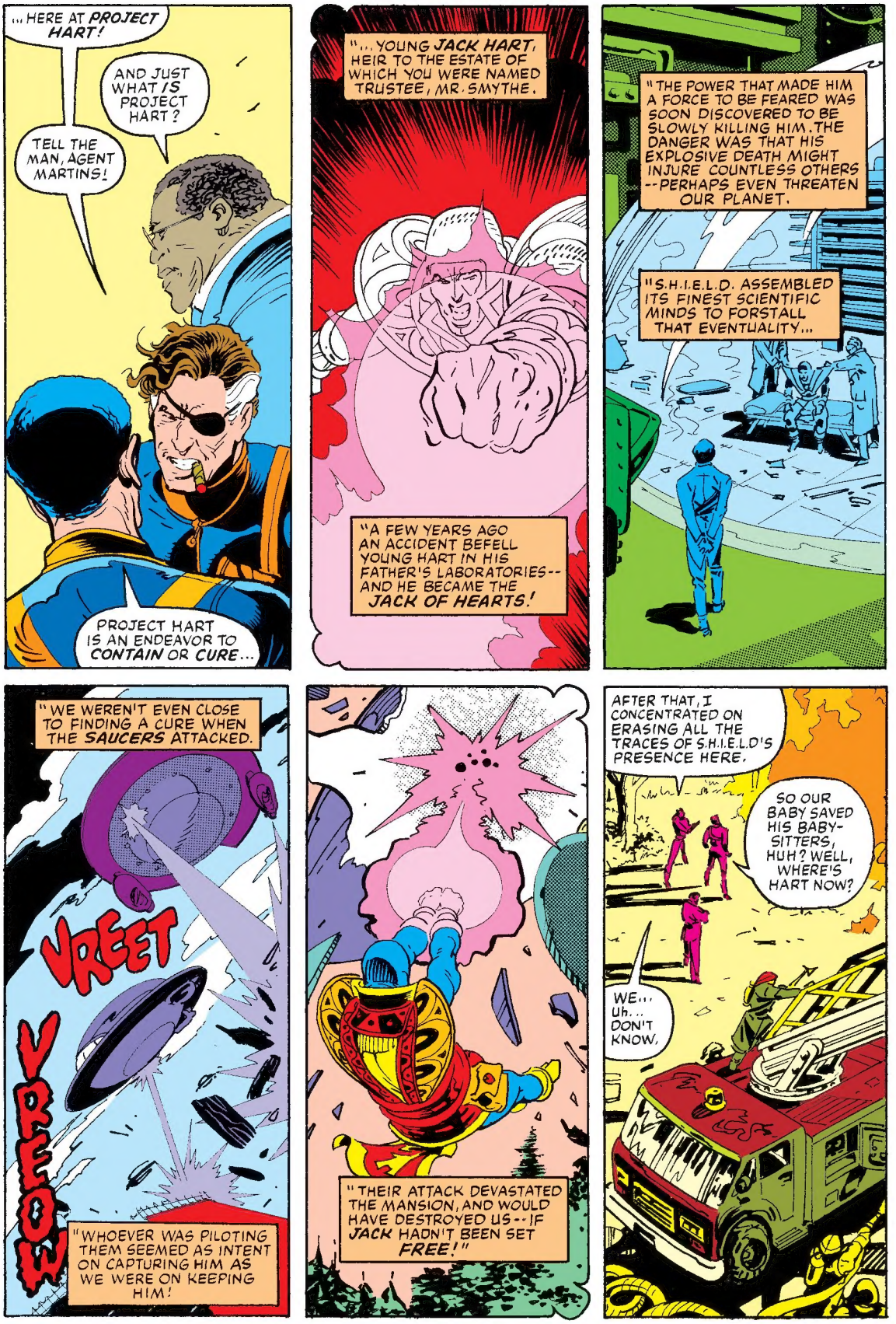


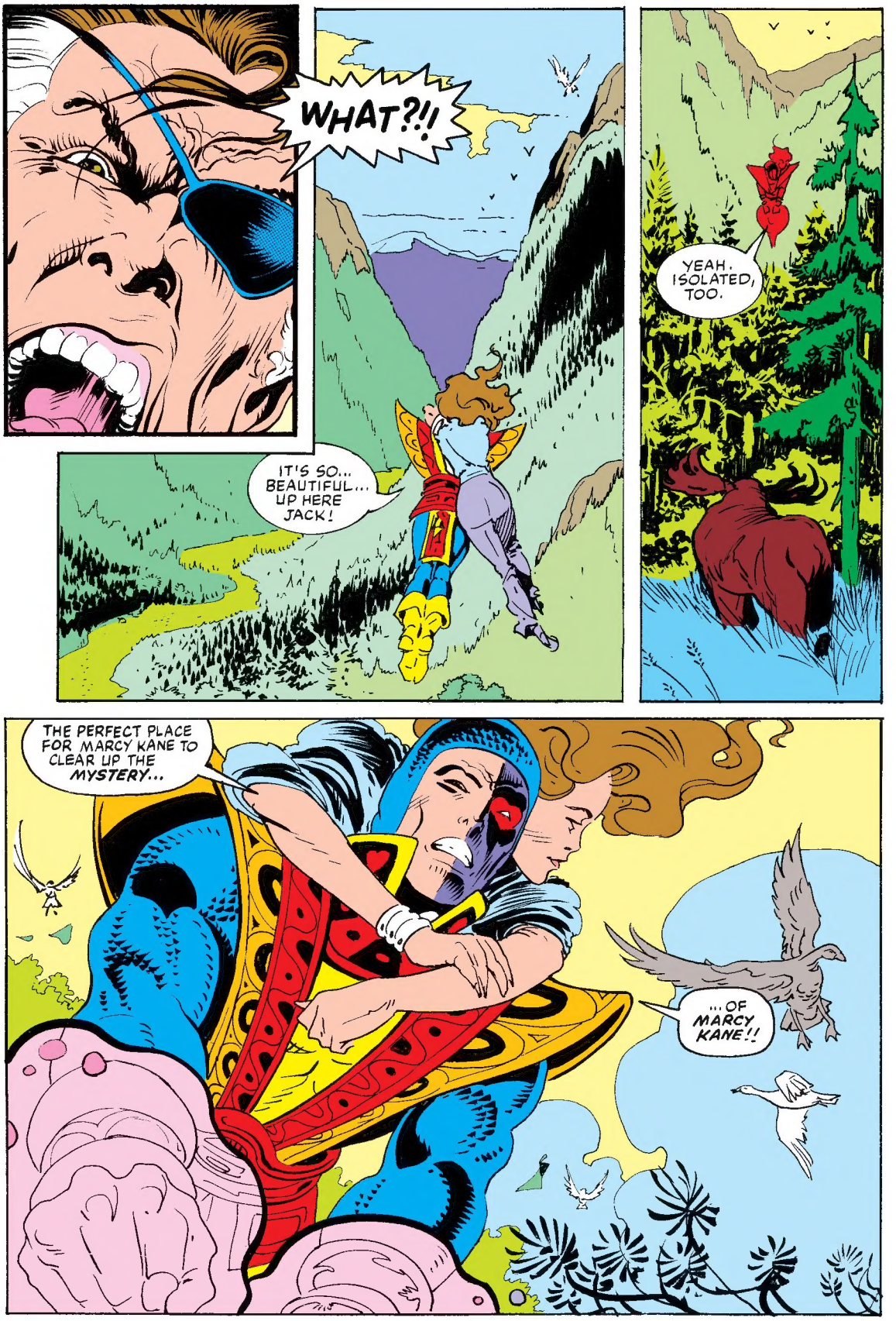
*SUPREME HEADQUARTERS INTERNATIONAL ESPIONAGE LAW-ENFORCEMENT DIVISION.

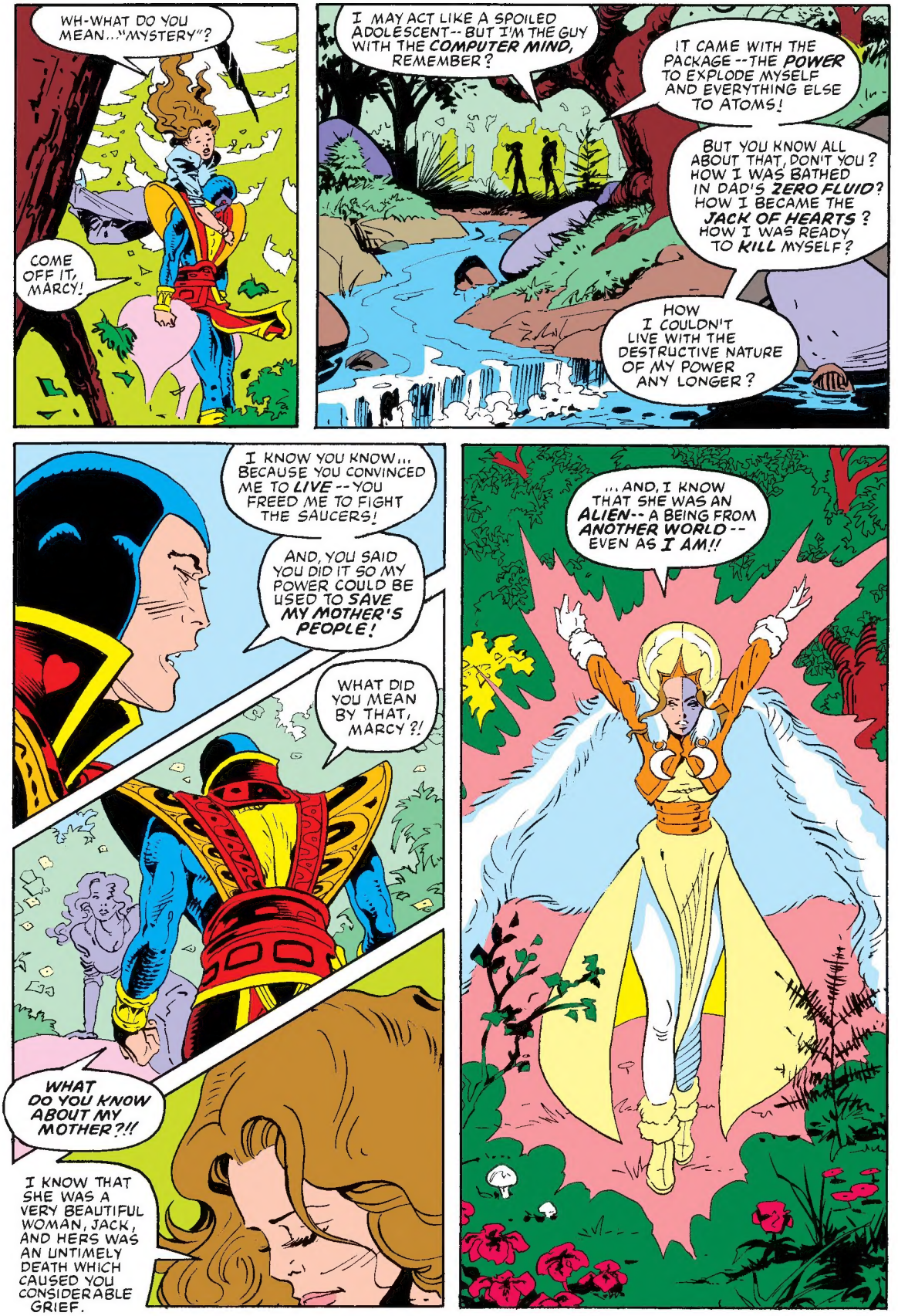
Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE JACK OF HEARTS™

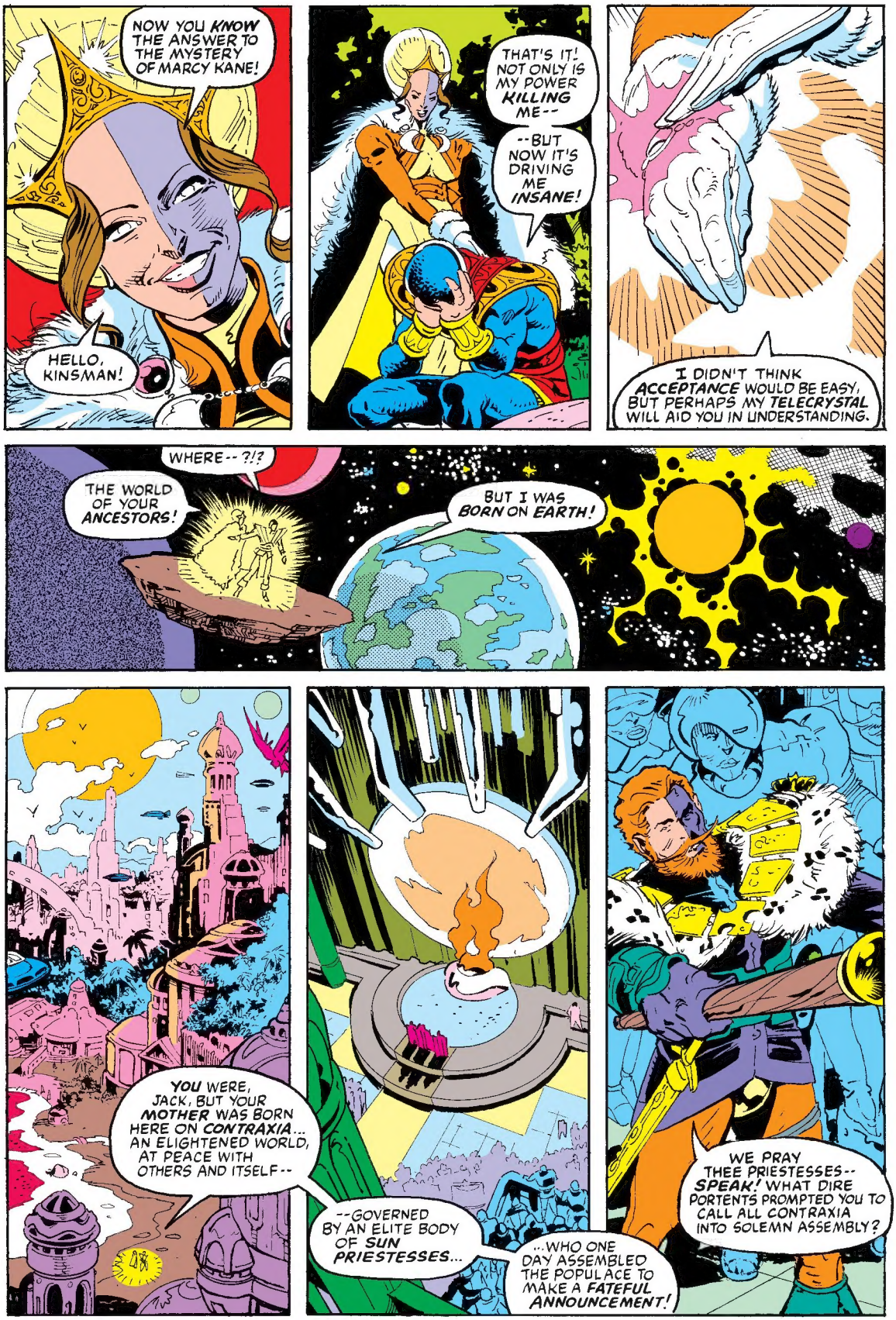


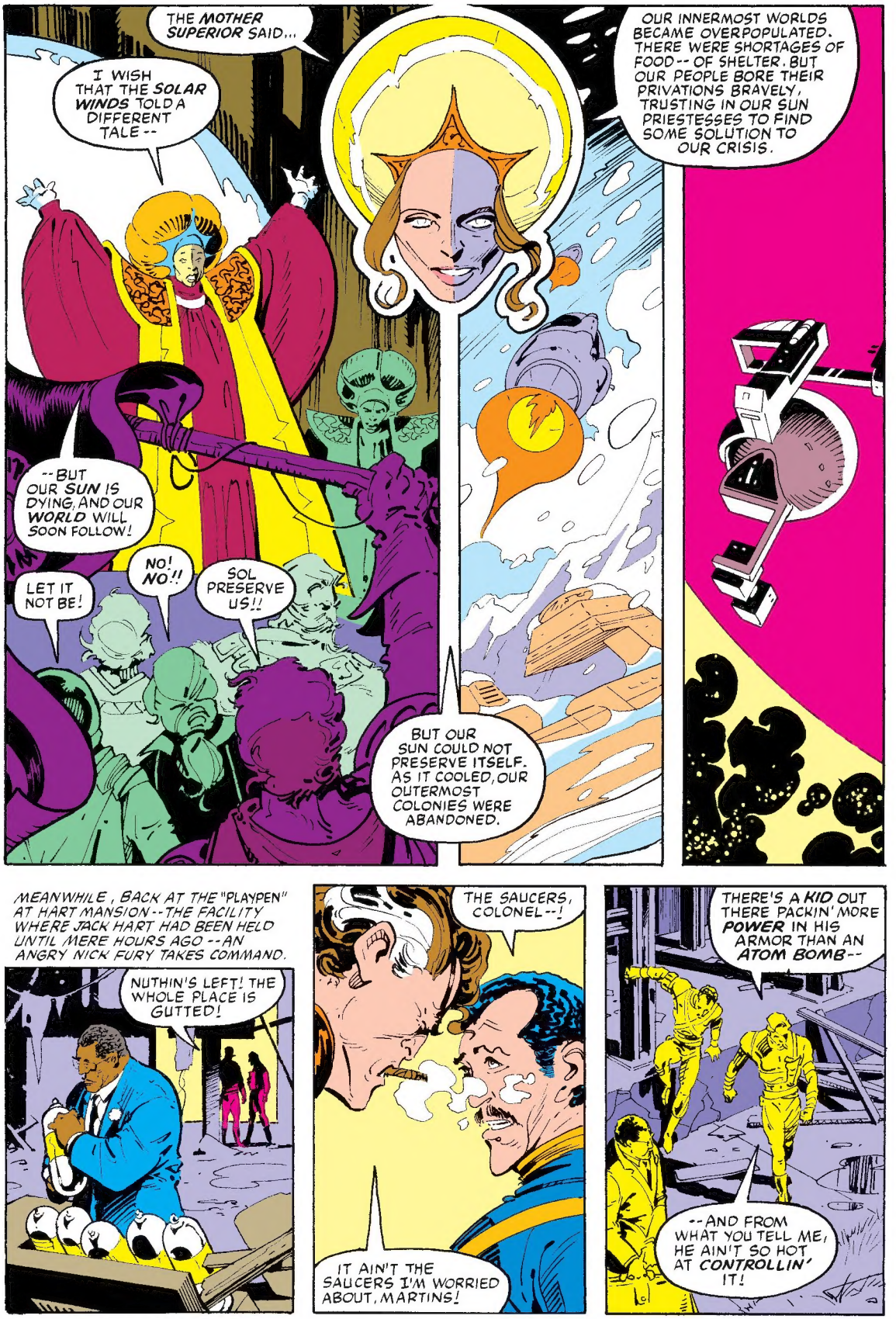

MARTINS, MR. SMYTHE IS TRUSTEE OF THAT ESTATE YOU SEE BURNING THERE! AT THIS POINT I THINK HE HAS A RIGHT TO KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON...


...HERE AT PROJECT HART!
AND JUST WHAT IS PROJECT HART?
TELL THE MAN, AGENT MARTINS!
PROJECT HART IS AN ENDEAVOR TO CONTAIN OR CURE...
"...YOUNG JACK HART, HEIR TO THE ESTATE OF WHICH YOU WERE NAMED TRUSTEE, MR. SMYTHE.
"A FEW YEARS AGO AN ACCIDENT BEFELL YOUNG HART IN HIS FATHER'S LABORATORIES--AND HE BECAME THE JACK OF HEARTS!
"THE POWER THAT MADE HIM A FORCE TO BE FEARED WAS SOON DISCOVERED TO BE SLOWLY KILLING HIM. THE DANGER WAS THAT HIS EXPLOSIVE DEATH MIGHT INJURE COUNTLESS OTHERS--PERHAPS EVEN THREATEN OUR PLANET.
"S.H.I.E.L.D. ASSEMBLED ITS FINEST SCIENTIFIC MINDS TO FORSTALL THAT EVENTUALITY...
"WE WEREN'T EVEN CLOSE TO FINDING A CURE WHEN THE SAUCERS ATTACKED.
VREET
VREEOW
"WHOEVER WAS PILOTING THEM SEEMED AS INTENT ON CAPTURING HIM AS WE WERE ON KEEPING HIM!
"THEIR ATTACK DEVASTATED THE MANSION, AND WOULD HAVE DESTROYED US--IF JACK HADN'T BEEN SET FREE!"
AFTER THAT, I CONCENTRATED ON ERASING ALL THE TRACES OF S.H.I.E.L.D'S PRESENCE HERE.
SO OUR BABY SAVED HIS BABY-SITTERS, HUH? WELL, WHERE'S HART NOW?
WE... Uh... DON'T KNOW.

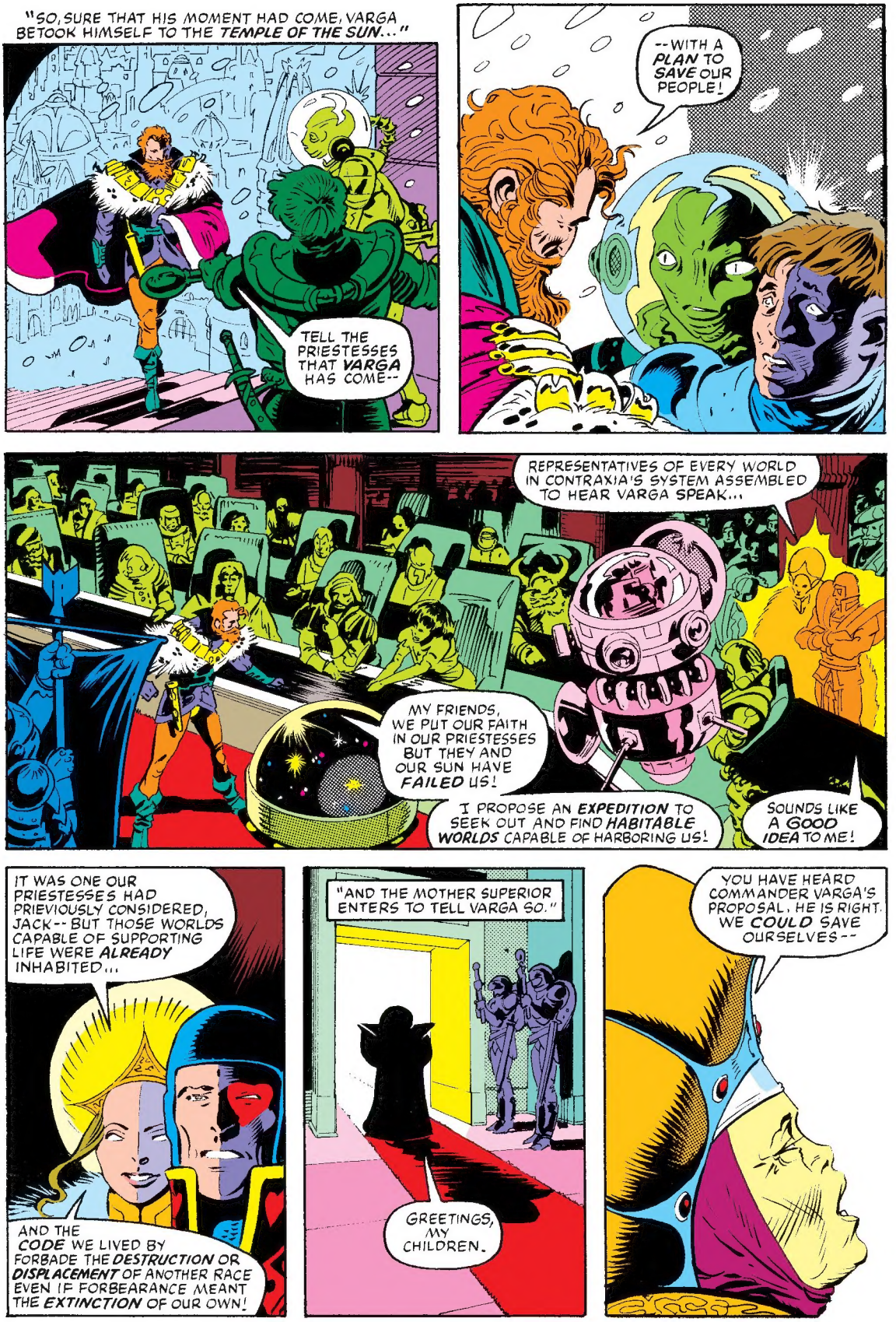

WHAT?!!
IT'S SO... BEAUTIFUL... UP HERE JACK!
YEAH. ISOLATED, TOO.
THE PERFECT PLACE FOR MARCY KANE TO CLEAR UP THE MYSTERY...
...OF MARCY KANE!!


WH-WHAT DO YOU MEAN..."MYSTERY"?
COME OFF IT, MARCY!
I MAY ACT LIKE A SPOILED ADOLESCENT-- BUT I'M THE GUY WITH THE COMPUTER MIND, REMEMBER?
IT CAME WITH THE PACKAGE--THE POWER TO EXPLODE MYSELF AND EVERYTHING ELSE TO ATOMS!
BUT YOU KNOW ALL ABOUT THAT, DON'T YOU? HOW I WAS BATHED IN DAD'S ZERO FLUID? HOW I BECAME THE JACK OF HEARTS? HOW I WAS READY TO KILL MYSELF?
HOW I COULDN'T LIVE WITH THE DESTRUCTIVE NATURE OF MY POWER ANY LONGER?
I KNOW YOU KNOW... BECAUSE YOU CONVINCED ME TO LIVE--YOU FREED ME TO FIGHT THE SAUCERS!
AND, YOU SAID YOU DID IT SO MY POWER COULD BE USED TO SAVE MY MOTHER'S PEOPLE!
WHAT DID YOU MEAN BY THAT, MARCY?!
WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT MY MOTHER?!!
I KNOW THAT SHE WAS A VERY BEAUTIFUL WOMAN, JACK, AND HERS WAS AN UNTIMELY DEATH WHICH CAUSED YOU CONSIDERABLE GRIEF.
...AND, I KNOW THAT SHE WAS AN ALIEN--A BEING FROM ANOTHER WORLD--EVEN AS I AM!!


NOW YOU KNOW THE ANSWER TO THE MYSTERY OF MARCY KANE!
HELLO, KINSMAN!
THAT'S IT! NOT ONLY IS MY POWER KILLING ME--
--BUT NOW IT'S DRIVING ME INSANE!
I DIDN'T THINK ACCEPTANCE WOULD BE EASY, BUT PERHAPS MY TELECRYSTAL WILL AID YOU IN UNDERSTANDING.
WHERE--?!?
THE WORLD OF YOUR ANCESTORS!
BUT I WAS BORN ON EARTH!
YOU WERE, JACK, BUT YOUR MOTHER WAS BORN HERE ON CONTRAXIA... AN ELIGHTENED WORLD, AT PEACE WITH OTHERS AND ITSELF--
--GOVERNED BY AN ELITE BODY OF SUN PRIESTESSES...
...WHO ONE DAY ASSEMBLED THE POPULACE TO MAKE A FATEFUL ANNOUNCEMENT!
WE PRAY THEE PRIESTESSES-- SPEAK! WHAT DIRE PORTENTS PROMPTED YOU TO CALL ALL CONTRAXIA INTO SOLEMN ASSEMBLY?

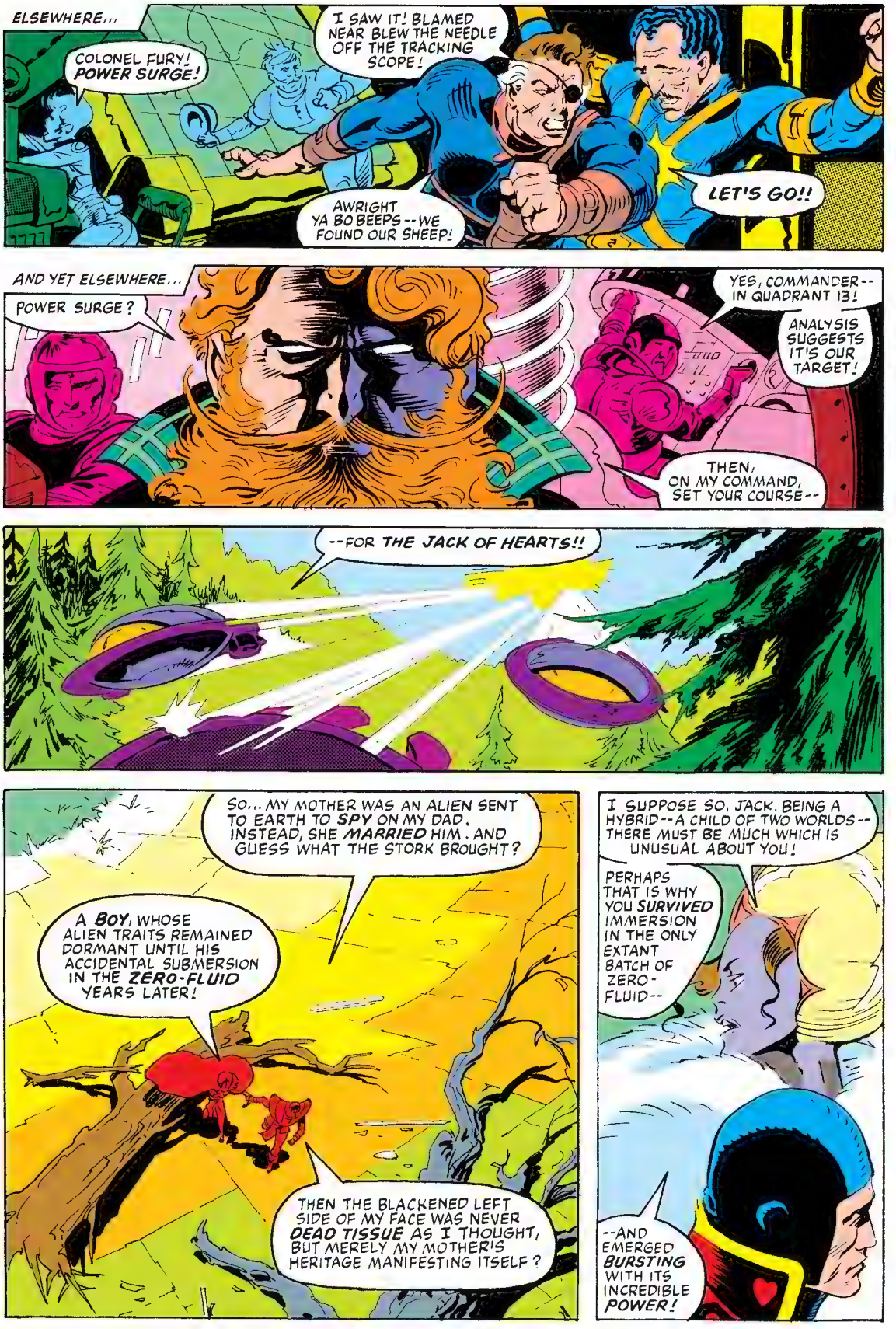

THE MOTHER SUPERIOR SAID...
I WISH THAT THE SOLAR WINDS TOLD A DIFFERENT TALE--
--BUT OUR SUN IS DYING, AND OUR WORLD WILL SOON FOLLOW!
LET IT NOT BE!
NO! NO!!
SOL PRESERVE US!!
BUT OUR SUN COULD NOT PRESERVE ITSELF. AS IT COOLED, OUR OUTERMOST COLONIES WERE ABANDONED.
OUR INNERMOST WORLDS BECAME OVERPOPULATED. THERE WERE SHORTAGES OF FOOD-- OF SHELTER. BUT OUR PEOPLE BORE THEIR PRIVATIONS BRAVELY, TRUSTING IN OUR SUN PRIESTESSES TO FIND SOME SOLUTION TO OUR CRISIS.
MEANWHILE, BACK AT THE "PLAYPEN" AT HART MANSION--THE FACILITY WHERE JACK HART HAD BEEN HELD UNTIL MERE HOURS AGO--AN ANGRY NICK FURY TAKES COMMAND.
NUTHIN'S LEFT! THE WHOLE PLACE IS GUTTED!
THE SAUCERS, COLONEL--!
IT AIN'T THE SAUCERS I'M WORRIED ABOUT, MARTINS!
THERE'S A KID OUT THERE PACKIN' MORE POWER IN HIS ARMOR THAN AN ATOM BOMB--
--AND FROM WHAT YOU TELL ME, HE AIN'T SO HOT AT CONTROLLIN' IT!

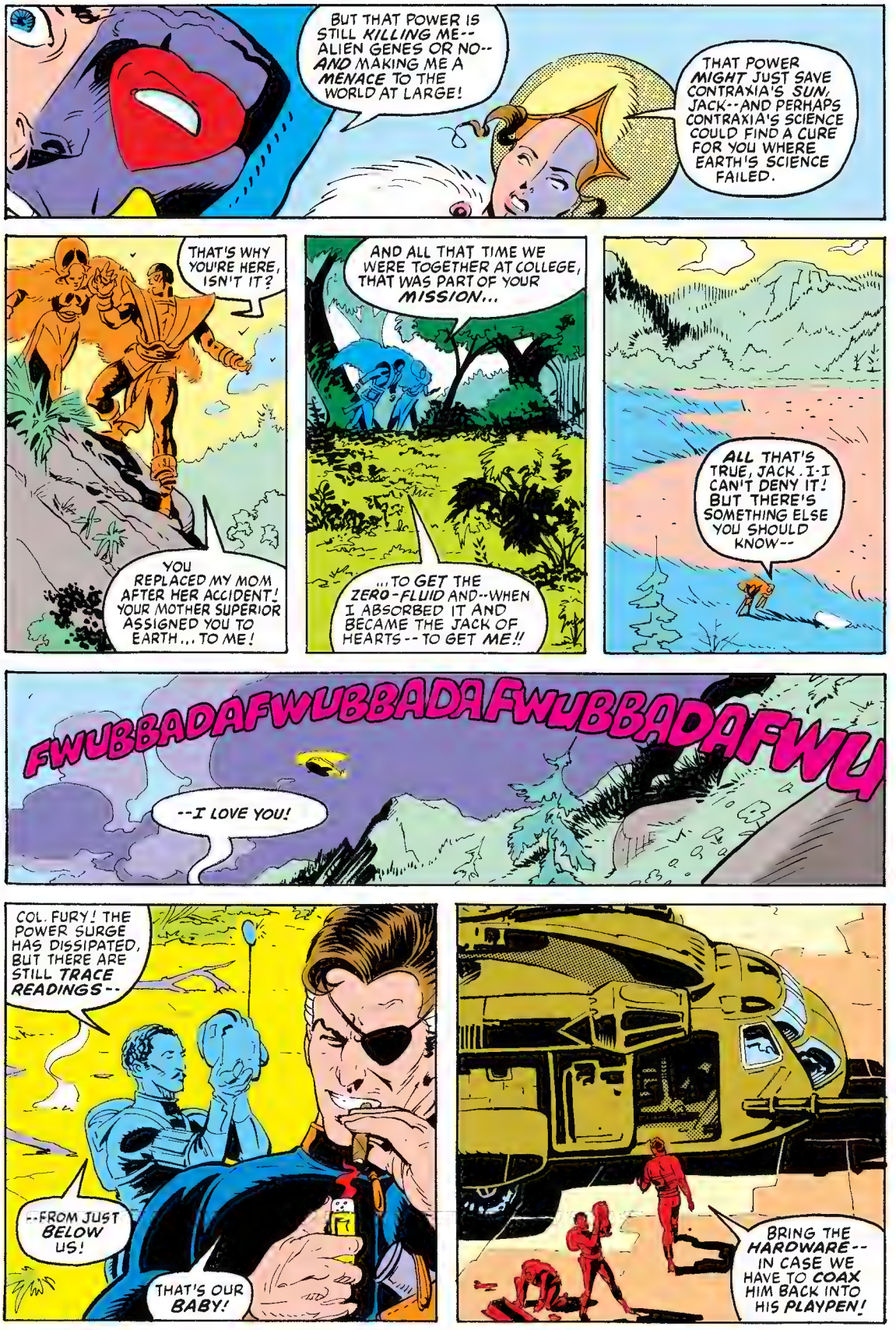
IF HE SHOULD CUT LOOSE--PURPOSEFULLY OR OTHERWISE--HE JUST MIGHT TAKE HALF THE EASTERN SEABOARD WITH HIM!
MAYBE THAT'S WHY THOSE SAUCERS WANTED HIM TOO, MARTINS! I DUNNO...
BUT I DO KNOW THAT THE EARTH AIN'T GONNA REST EASY 'TIL WE FIND THE JACK OF HEARTS!
SO THIS WORLD... YOUR WORLD... WAS DOOMED, MARCY? WHAT HAPPENED THEN?
LET THE TELECRYSTAL RECONSTRUCT THAT DARK TIME, JACK...
"...WHEN OUR VERY CODE AND ITS KEEPERS CAME TO BE QUESTIONED BY THIS MAN...
OUR SUN COOLS--OUR WORLD DIES--AND OUR RULERS DO NOTHING!
"... COMMANDER VARGA!
I ASK YOU, MUST WE SO WILLINGLY--SO QUIESCENTLY--EMBRACE OUR OWN DEMISE?!


"SO, SURE THAT HIS MOMENT HAD COME, VARGA BETOOK HIMSELF TO THE TEMPLE OF THE SUN..."
TELL THE PRIESTESSES THAT VARGA HAS COME--
--WITH A PLAN TO SAVE OUR PEOPLE!
REPRESENTATIVES OF EVERY WORLD IN CONTRAXIA'S SYSTEM ASSEMBLED TO HEAR VARGA SPEAK...
MY FRIENDS, WE PUT OUR FAITH IN OUR PRIESTESSES BUT THEY AND OUR SUN HAVE FAILED US!
I PROPOSE AN EXPEDITION TO SEEK OUT AND FIND HABITABLE WORLDS CAPABLE OF HARBORING US!
SOUNDS LIKE A GOOD IDEA TO ME!
IT WAS ONE OUR PRIESTESSES HAD PRIEVIOUSLY CONSIDERED, JACK-- BUT THOSE WORLDS CAPABLE OF SUPPORTING LIFE WERE ALREADY INHABITED...
AND THE CODE WE LIVED BY FORBADE THE DESTRUCTION OR DISPLACEMENT OF ANOTHER RACE EVEN IF FORBEARANCE MEANT THE EXTINCTION OF OUR OWN!
"AND THE MOTHER SUPERIOR ENTERS TO TELL VARGA SO."
GREETINGS, MY CHILDREN.
YOU HAVE HEARD COMMANDER VARGA'S PROPOSAL. HE IS RIGHT. WE COULD SAVE OURSELVES--

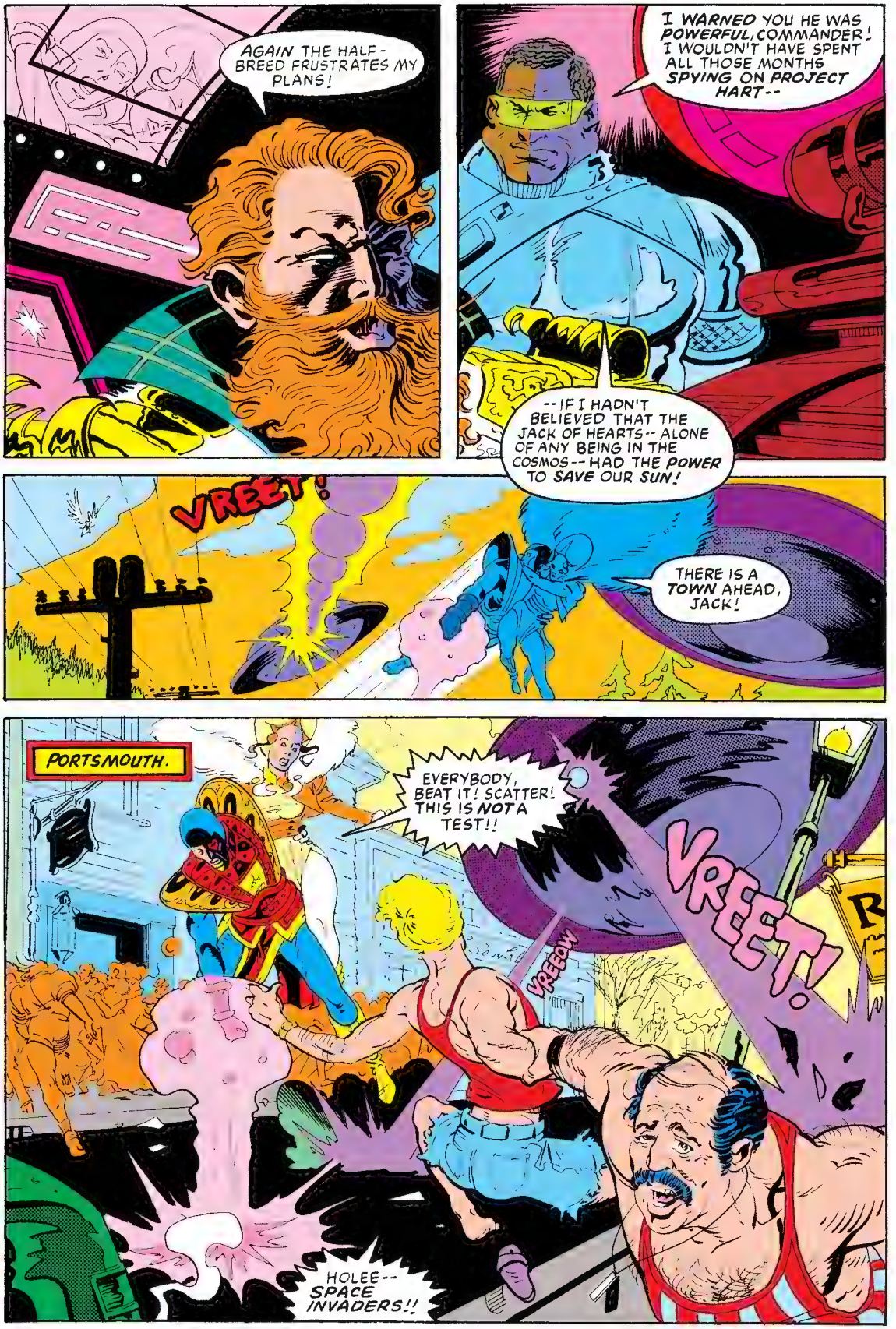
--BY SLAYING OTHERS. PERHAPS IN THIS INSTANCE GENOCIDE COULD BE RATIONALIZED AWAY.
BUT, DESPITE THE PERIL POSED US BY THE IMMINENT DEATH OF OUR SUN, WE LIVE AND ARE BOUND BY A CODE OF HONOR!
TO DO AS COMMANDER VARGA PROPOSES WOULD MEAN BREAKING OUR CODE. TRUE WE WOULD SURVIVE...
BUT AT THE COST OF OUR... SOULS!
NO! WE MUST FIND ANOTHER WAY!
I... BOW BEFORE THE WILL OF MY PEOPLE!
YOU ARE A GOOD MAN, VARGA. ONLY SUCH DANGER AS WE NOW FACE COULD MAKE YOU QUESTION OUR CODE.
HELP US TO FIND A MORAL MEANS OF SURVIVIAL.
"THUS, FOR A TIME, ALL OUR EFFORTS WERE TURNED TOWARD LOCATING SOME SOURCE OF ENERGY CAPABLE OF REVITALIZING OUR COOLING SUN.
NOW WHAT AM I SEEING?
THE SENDING OUT OF OUR SCIENTISTS TO EVERY CORNER OF THE COSMOS TO SEEK POWER!
"ON SOME WORLDS OUR EMISSARIES MET WITH... DISASTER...
"ON OTHERS THEY ENCOUNTERED LOVE.

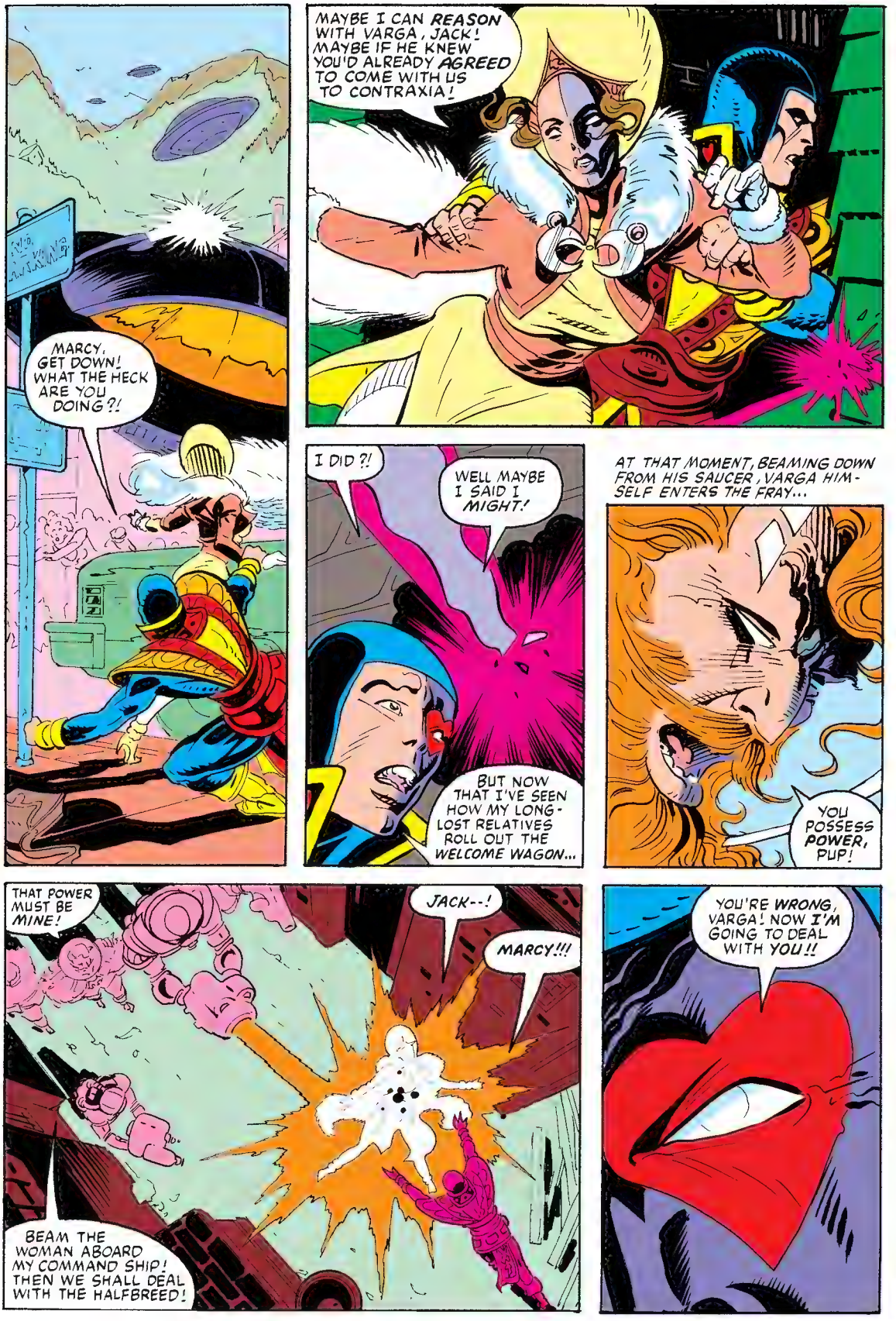
FATHER! MOTHER!!
YES--YOUR MOTHER--THE WOMAN WHO YOU KNEW AS MARIE HART. SHE WAS A CONTRAXIAN SCIENTIST SENT TO EARTH TO MONITOR THE ENERGY-RESEARCH CONDUCTED BY YOUR FATHER.
SUSPECTING THAT HIS ZERO-FLUID MIGHT SAVE OUR SUN, SHE AIDED HIS EXPERIMENTS.
IN TIME, SHE FELL IN LOVE WITH HIM. THEY MARRIED. BORE A SON...
ME!
BUT THEN, ONE DAY, HER REPORTS TO CONTRAXIA CEASED!
MY GOD!! I--I RECOGNIZE THIS SPOT!!
IT'S THE ROAD WHERE MOTHER HAD HER ACCIDENT!!
JACK, STOP! YOU'RE VIEWING AN ILLUSION!
YOU CAN'T CHANGE ANYTHING!
I MUST! MOTHER MUSTN'T DIE AGAIN!!
SHSKROOM
YOU COULDN'T NO ONE COULD. I'M SORRY, JACK...
MOTHER?

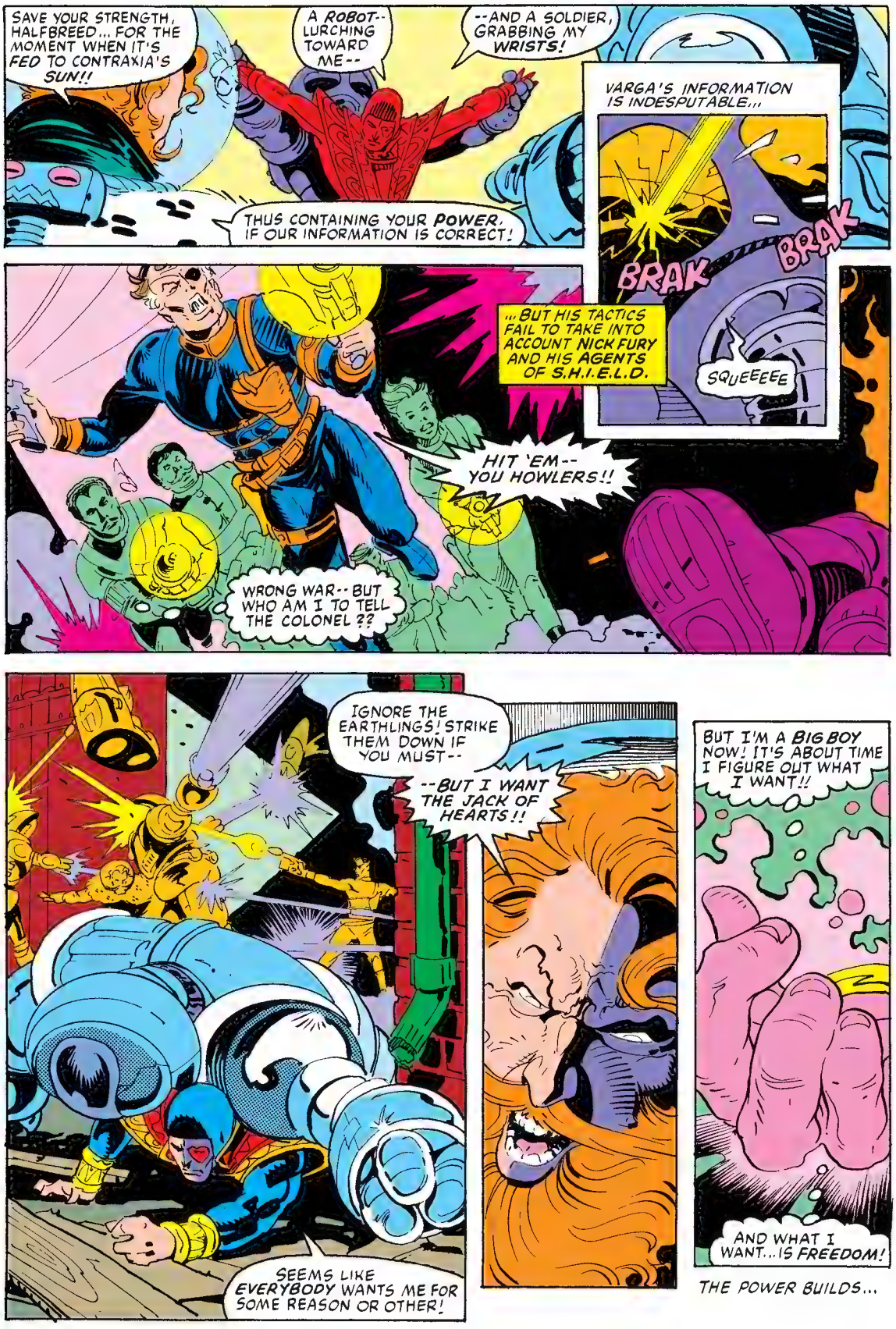

ELSEWHERE...
COLONEL FURY! POWER SURGE!
I SAW IT! BLAMED NEAR BLEW THE NEEDLE OFF THE TRACKING SCOPE!
AWRIGHT YA BO BEEPS--WE FOUND OUR SHEEP!
LET'S GO!!
AND YET ELSEWHERE...
POWER SURGE?
YES, COMMANDER--IN QUADRANT 13!
ANALYSIS SUGGESTS IT'S OUR TARGET!
THEN, ON MY COMMAND, SET YOUR COURSE--
--FOR THE JACK OF HEARTS!!
SO... MY MOTHER WAS AN ALIEN SENT TO EARTH TO SPY ON MY DAD. INSTEAD, SHE MARRIED HIM. AND GUESS WHAT THE STORK BROUGHT?
A BOY, WHOSE ALIEN TRAITS REMAINED DORMANT UNTIL HIS ACCIDENTAL SUBMERSION IN THE ZERO-FLUID YEARS LATER!
THEN THE BLACKENED LEFT SIDE OF MY FACE WAS NEVER DEAD TISSUE AS I THOUGHT, BUT MERELY MY MOTHER'S HERITAGE MANIFESTING ITSELF?
I SUPPOSE SO, JACK. BEING A HYBRID--A CHILD OF TWO WORLDS--THERE MUST BE MUCH WHICH IS UNUSUAL ABOUT YOU!
PERHAPS THAT IS WHY YOU SURVIVED IMMERSION IN THE ONLY EXTANT BATCH OF ZERO-FLUID--
--AND EMERGED BURSTING WITH ITS INCREDIBLE POWER!


BUT THAT POWER IS STILL KILLING ME--ALIEN GENES OR NO--AND MAKING ME A MENACE TO THE WORLD AT LARGE!
THAT POWER MIGHT JUST SAVE CONTRAXIA'S SUN, JACK--AND PERHAPS CONTRAXIA'S SCIENCE COULD FIND A CURE FOR YOU WHERE EARTH'S SCIENCE FAILED.
THAT'S WHY YOU'RE HERE, ISN'T IT?
YOU REPLACED MY MOM AFTER HER ACCIDENT! YOUR MOTHER SUPERIOR ASSIGNED YOU TO EARTH... TO ME!
AND ALL THAT TIME WE WERE TOGETHER AT COLLEGE, THAT WAS PART OF YOUR MISSION...
...TO GET THE ZERO-FLUID AND--WHEN I ABSORBED IT AND BECAME THE JACK OF HEARTS--TO GET ME!!
ALL THAT'S TRUE, JACK. I-I CAN'T DENY IT! BUT THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE YOU SHOULD KNOW--
FWUBBADAFWUBBADAFWUBBADAFWU
--I LOVE YOU!
COL. FURY! THE POWER SURGE HAS DISSIPATED, BUT THERE ARE STILL TRACE READINGS--
--FROM JUST BELOW US!
THAT'S OUR BABY!
BRING THE HARDWARE--IN CASE WE HAVE TO COAX HIM BACK INTO HIS PLAYPEN!

HOWEVER, BEFORE NICK FURY AND HIS AGENTS OF S.H.I.E.L.D. CAN RECAPTURE THEIR ESCAPEE...
MARCY! THE SAUCERS AGAIN!
AND CONTRAXIAN FOOT-SOLDIERS!
CONTRAXIANS?! YOUR PEOPLE??!
COMMANDER VARGA'S! WHEN THE SAUCERS ATTACKED YOUR MANSION, I REALIZED HE MUST HAVE DECIDED TO EXCEED HIS AUTHORITY-- TO GO AGAINST THE SUN-PRIESTESSES AND THE CODE!
HE PLANS TO SEIZE YOU-- FORCE YOU TO USE YOUR POWER TO THE LIMIT, EVEN IF IT COSTS YOU YOUR LIFE--
--AND CLAIM CREDIT FOR SAVING CONTRAXIA HIMSELF!
GEE, AT LEAST YOU HAD THE DECENCY TO ASK ME IF I WAS WILLING TO HELP!
WITH KINSMEN LIKE VARGA-- WHO NEEDS ENEMIES!!
SHKROW!
C'MON, MARCY! LET'S GIVE VARGA A RUN FOR HIS MONEY!
SHSKROOOM!


AGAIN THE HALF-BREED FRUSTRATES MY PLANS!
I WARNED YOU HE WAS POWERFUL, COMMANDER! I WOULDN'T HAVE SPENT ALL THOSE MONTHS SPYING ON PROJECT HART--
--IF I HADN'T BELIEVED THAT THE JACK OF HEARTS-- ALONE OF ANY BEING IN THE COSMOS-- HAD THE POWER TO SAVE OUR SUN!
VREET!
THERE IS A TOWN AHEAD, JACK!
PORTSMOUTH.
EVERYBODY, BEAT IT! SCATTER! THIS IS NOT A TEST!!
VREEOW
VREET!
HOLEE-- SPACE INVADERS!!

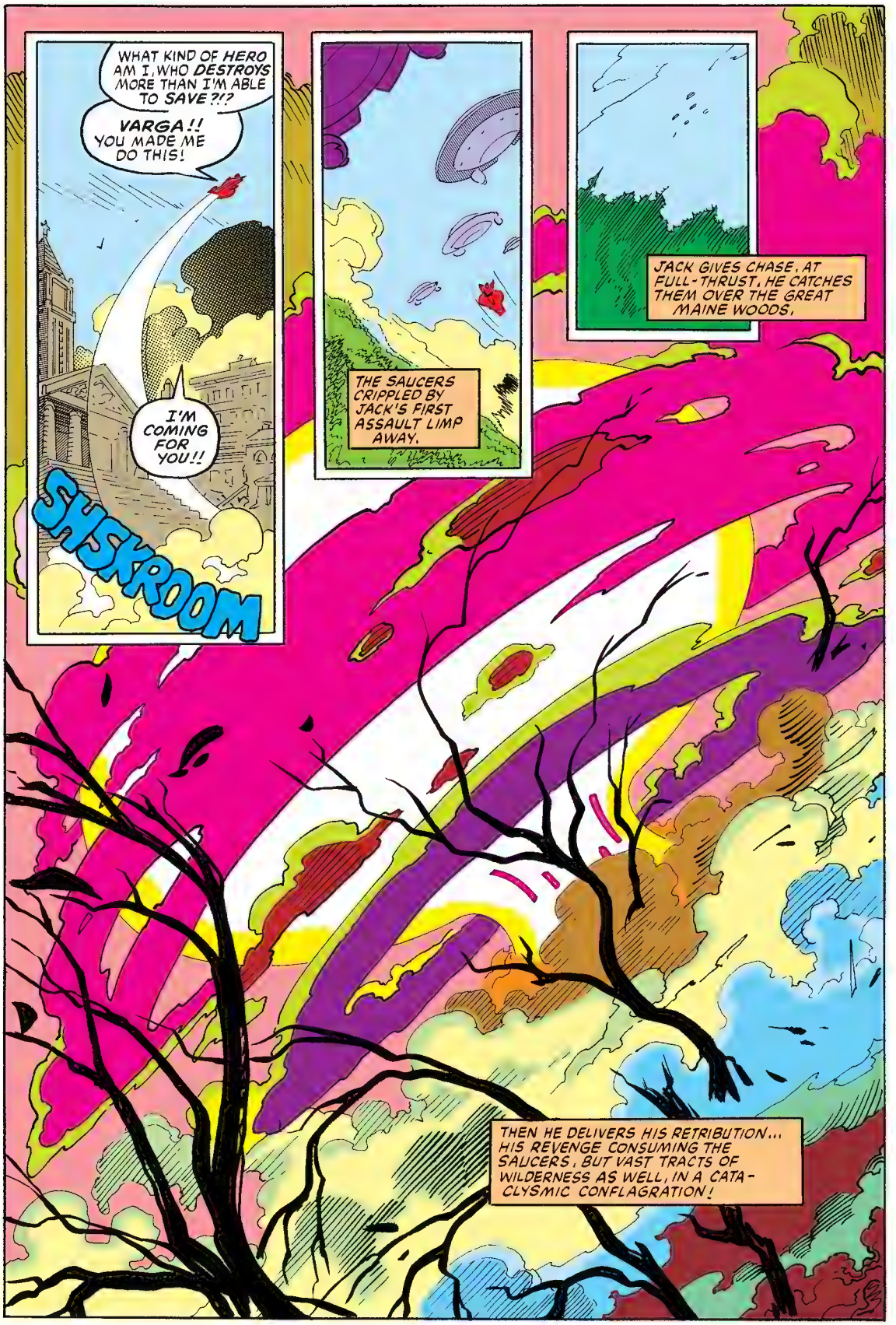

MARCY, GET DOWN! WHAT THE HECK ARE YOU DOING?!
MAYBE I CAN REASON WITH VARGA, JACK! MAYBE IF HE KNEW YOU'D ALREADY AGREED TO COME WITH US TO CONTRAXIA!
I DID?!
WELL MAYBE I SAID I MIGHT!
BUT NOW THAT I'VE SEEN HOW MY LONG-LOST RELATIVES ROLL OUT THE WELCOME WAGON...
AT THAT MOMENT, BEAMING DOWN FROM HIS SAUCER, VARGA HIMSELF ENTERS THE FRAY...
YOU POSSESS POWER, PUP!
THAT POWER MUST BE MINE!
JACK--!
MARCY!!!
BEAM THE WOMAN ABOARD MY COMMAND SHIP! THEN WE SHALL DEAL WITH THE HALFBREED!
YOU'RE WRONG, VARGA! NOW I'M GOING TO DEAL WITH YOU!!

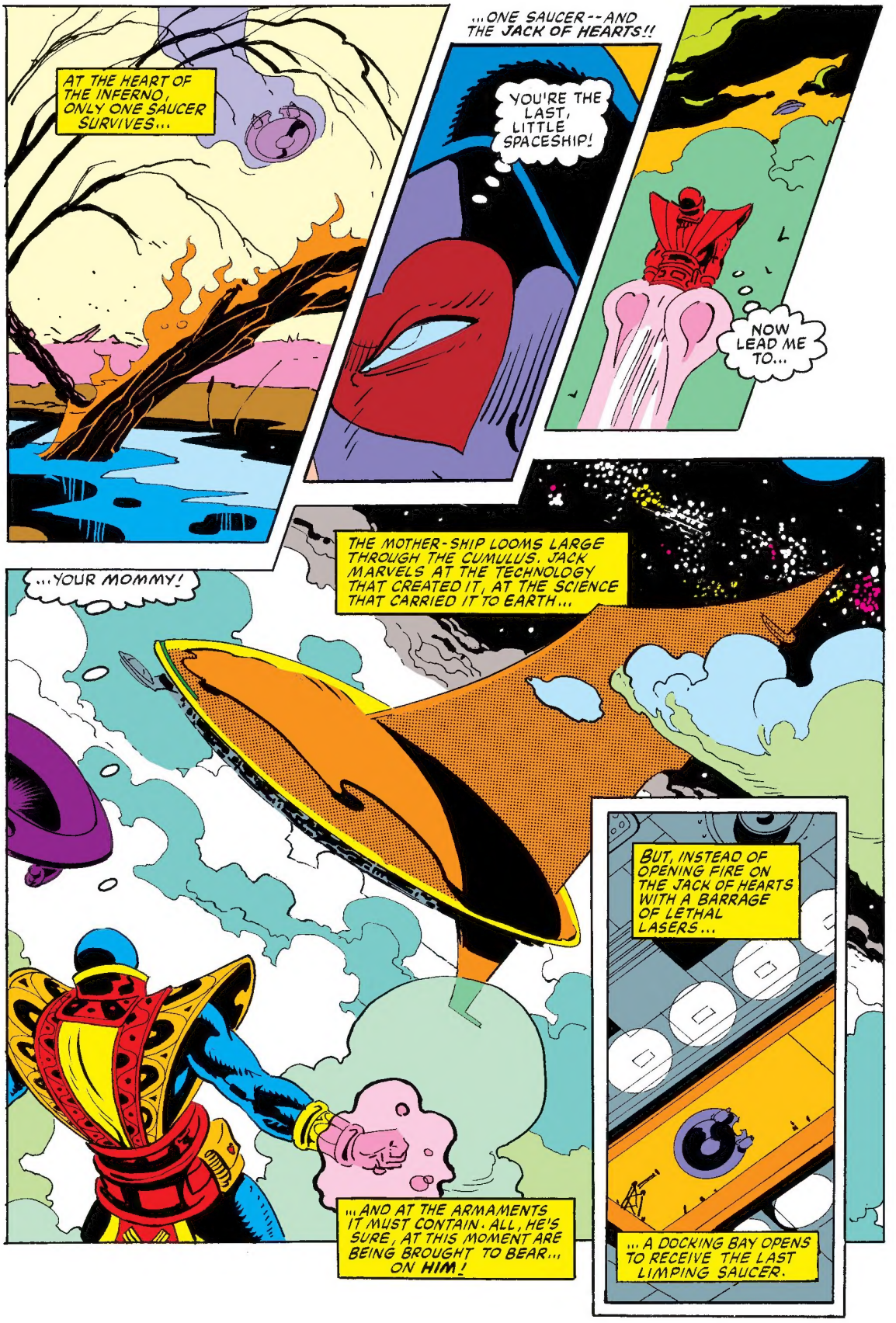

SAVE YOUR STRENGTH, HALFBREED... FOR THE MOMENT WHEN IT'S FED TO CONTRAXIA'S SUN!!
A ROBOT-- LURCHING TOWARD ME--
--AND A SOLDIER, GRABBING MY WRISTS!
THUS CONTAINING YOUR POWER, IF OUR INFORMATION IS CORRECT!
VARGA'S INFORMATION IS INDISPUTABLE...
BRAK
BRAK
SQUEEEEE
...BUT HIS TACTICS FAIL TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT NICK FURY AND HIS AGENTS OF S.H.I.E.L.D.
HIT 'EM-- YOU HOWLERS!!
WRONG WAR-- BUT WHO AM I TO TELL THE COLONEL ??
IGNORE THE EARTHLINGS! STRIKE THEM DOWN IF YOU MUST--
--BUT I WANT THE JACK OF HEARTS!!
SEEMS LIKE EVERYBODY WANTS ME FOR SOME REASON OR OTHER!
BUT I'M A BIG BOY NOW! IT'S ABOUT TIME I FIGURE OUT WHAT I WANT!!
AND WHAT I WANT...IS FREEDOM!

THE POWER BUILDS...

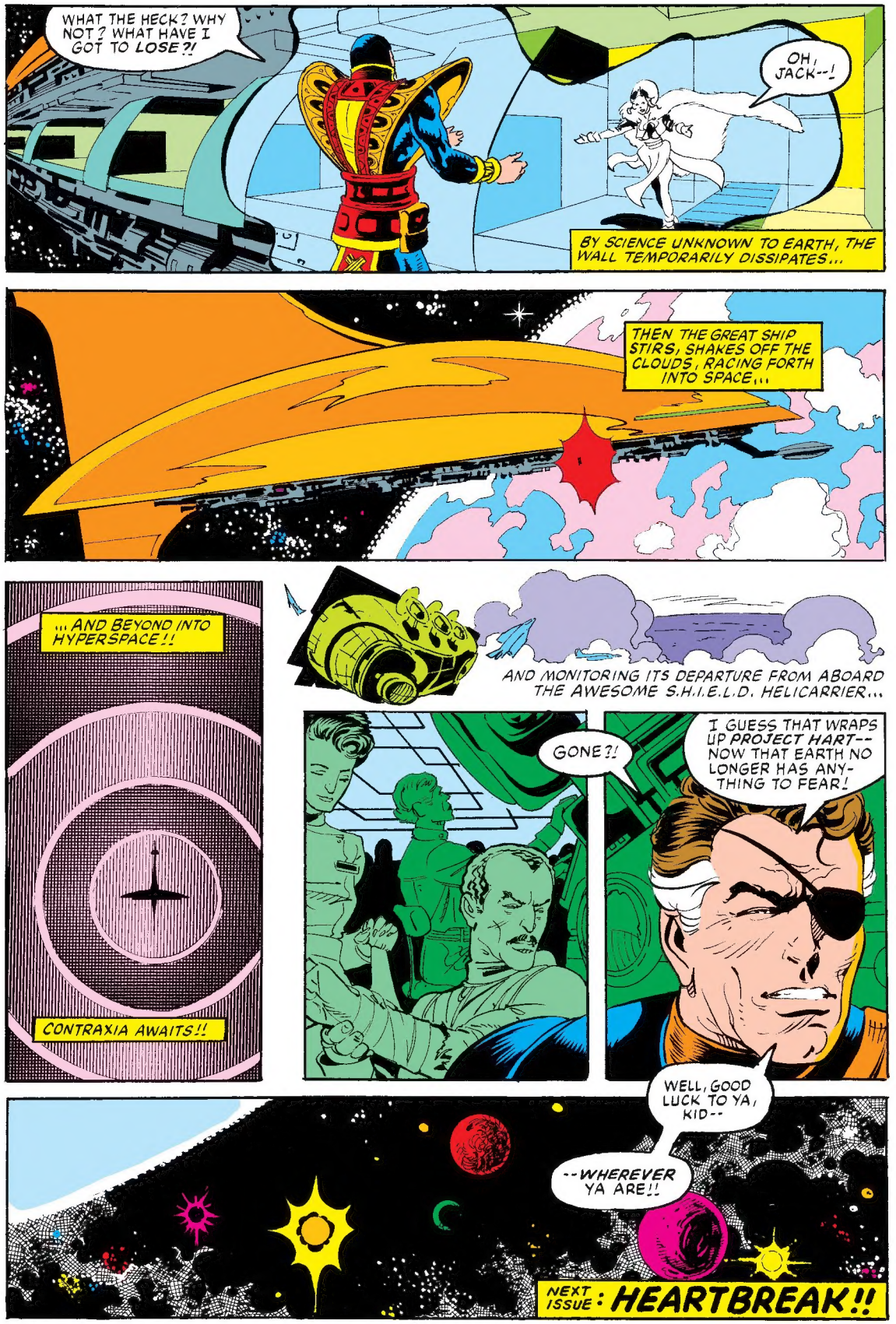
...EVEN AS JACK'S WOULD-BE RESCUERS FIND THEMSELVES IN NEED OF RESCUE!
UH, DUGAN TO ENTERPRISE -- BEAM US ABOARD!
I'M AFRAID THE ONLY WAY WE'RE GONNA GET OURSELVES OUTTA THIS PICKLE, DUM DUM, IS FIGHT OUR WAY OUT!
I'M FIGHTIN'! I'M FIGHTIN'! BUT THE ALIENS AIN'T FALLIN'!
'IN FACT, NICK--IT SEEMS THE ODDS ARE WITH THEM!
BUT THEN...
SHHHSS..
..SSKROOM!
WHAT'S THE MATTER, ALIEN, CAN'T TAKE THE HEAT?!

NICK'S
FISH + CHIPS
SKREEEOW!!
THEN MAYBE YOU SHOULD LEARN NOT TO PLAY NEAR THE FIRE!
ONE AFTER ANOTHER, THE ALIEN ATTACKERS ARE BLASTED BACK, THEIR ARMOR SHREDS BEFORE THE FORCE OF JACK'S ONSLAUGHT!
SOME SEEK SHELTER IN THEIR SHIPS ... TO NO AVAIL.
THERE CAN BE NO SHELTER...
...FROM THE JACK OF HEARTS!!
...NO SANCTUARY...
WANT TO SEE SOME MORE OF THAT POWER YOU CAME HERE TO STEAL VARGA?!
DO YOU NEED ANOTHER DISPLAY--OR IS IT TIME TO CALL IT...
...QUITS?
OH NO!!
THE BATTLE IS OVER. THE SAUCERS ARE FLEEING. BUT FOR THE FIRST TIME OUR HERO TAKES NOTICE OF THE BATTLEFIELD... AND WHAT HE HAS DONE TO IT AS THE JACK OF HEARTS!


WHAT KIND OF HERO AM I, WHO DESTROYS MORE THAN I'M ABLE TO SAVE?!?
VARGA!! YOU MADE ME DO THIS!
I'M COMING FOR YOU!!
SHSKROOM
THE SAUCERS CRIPPLED BY JACK'S FIRST ASSAULT LIMP AWAY.
JACK GIVES CHASE. AT FULL-THRUST, HE CATCHES THEM OVER THE GREAT MAINE WOODS.
THEN HE DELIVERS HIS RETRIBUTION... HIS REVENGE CONSUMING THE SAUCERS, BUT VAST TRACTS OF WILDERNESS AS WELL, IN A CATACLYSMIC CONFLAGRATION!


AT THE HEART OF THE INFERNO, ONLY ONE SAUCER SURVIVES...
...ONE SAUCER--AND THE JACK OF HEARTS!!
YOU'RE THE LAST, LITTLE SPACESHIP!
NOW LEAD ME TO...
THE MOTHER-SHIP LOOMS LARGE THROUGH THE CUMULUS. JACK MARVELS AT THE TECHNOLOGY THAT CREATED IT, AT THE SCIENCE THAT CARRIED IT TO EARTH...
...YOUR MOMMY!
...AND AT THE ARMAMENTS IT MUST CONTAIN. ALL, HE'S SURE, AT THIS MOMENT ARE BEING BROUGHT TO BEAR... ON HIM!
BUT, INSTEAD OF OPENING FIRE ON THE JACK OF HEARTS WITH A BARRAGE OF LETHAL LASERS...
...A DOCKING BAY OPENS TO RECEIVE THE LAST LIMPING SAUCER.

AND, BY SOME MARVEL OF TELECOMMUNICATION, A VOICE CRIES OUT ACROSS THE UPPER ATMOSPHERE, HAILING OUR HERO.
THE VOICE OF...
MARCY KANE!
JACK, I KNOW YOU'RE ANGRY-- YOU HAVE EVERY RIGHT TO BE!
VARGA EXCEEDED HIS AUTHORITY! YOU'VE PUNISHED HIM FOR THAT!
BUT HE'S NOT AN EVIL MAN! HE ACTED AS HE DID OUT OF CONCERN FOR CONTRAXIA!
I, TOO, WANT YOU TO SAVE OUR WORLD, JACK-- YOUR MOTHER'S WORLD!
UNLIKE VARGA, I WILL NOT TRY TO FORCE YOU TO USE YOUR POWER FOR CONTRAXIA'S SAKE!
I CAN ONLY ASK THAT YOU FIND IT IN YOUR HEART OF HEARTS TO BE A HERO TO BILLIONS WHO MAY OTHERWISE DIE!
TO BE A HERO! THAT'S WHAT HE ALWAYS WANTED TO BE, ALWAYS HOPED FOR.
YET IT'S NOT THE FATE OF UNTOLD BILLIONS THAT DECIDES FOR HIM... BUT THE LOVE OF ONE ALIEN WOMAN!


WHAT THE HECK? WHY NOT? WHAT HAVE I GOT TO LOSE?!
OH, JACK--!
BY SCIENCE UNKNOWN TO EARTH, THE WALL TEMPORARILY DISSIPATES...
THEN THE GREAT SHIP STIRS, SHAKES OFF THE CLOUDS, RACING FORTH INTO SPACE...
...AND BEYOND INTO HYPERSPACE!!
CONTRAXIA AWAITS!!
AND MONITORING ITS DEPARTURE FROM ABOARD THE AWESOME S.H.I.E.L.D. HELICARRIER...
GONE?!
I GUESS THAT WRAPS UP PROJECT HART-- NOW THAT EARTH NO LONGER HAS ANY-THING TO FEAR!
WELL, GOOD LUCK TO YA, KID--
--WHEREVER YA ARE!!
NEXT ISSUE: HEARTBREAK!!

KAMIC RIDER
MARIKA